

Turn The Other Cheek...

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Turn the other cheek is a famous phrase taken from the Sermon on the Mount in the Christian New Testament. In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus says:

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you." (Matthew 5:38-42, NIV)

A parallel version is offered in the Sermon on the Plain in the Gospel of Luke:

"But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you," "Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you. And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also. Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." (Luke 6:28-31. King James Version)

Consider:

Is it right to 'turn the other cheek', should we stand up for ourselves, and should we let others 'walk all over us'? Have you ever had any experiences of this and how difficult / easy is it to do?

Members of the discussion group began by saying that from their perspective, the above may seem very difficult to live by and almost impossible to follow. However, from a spiritual perspective, the above could be understood and followed.

Devotees detail that the most important characteristic of a saint is that he/she is tolerant. It is for this reason that saints always choose to 'turn the other cheek' when placed in difficult situations. They will simply walk away, rather than retaliate and fight back. God Knowledge and spiritual understanding makes us calm at all times, as we remember the Almighty force around us. To stay calm and tolerate when in difficult situations, we must remember this Knowledge that has been bestowed upon us and not forget that it only takes a second in lapse of concentration, to behave in ways, which saints should not. As humans, we have been given the intellect to consider our actions. As spiritually enlightened souls, we should always remain conscious of what is 'right' and 'wrong'. It is important for us to assess situations and behave accordingly.

The group felt that turning the other cheek may not always be appropriate in all situations. For instance, if an individual is violently attacked, he/she may not turn the other cheek; they may wish to protect and defend themselves from harm. On the other hand, if an individual is in a situation in which they are being criticized, looked down upon, or judged, it is easier to turn the other cheek, remain humble and just 'take' what is being said. By turning the other cheek, the guilty party will often reflect on his/her own actions and consider their behavior in the future; not retaliating is a weapon of defence in itself.

Younger members of the group considered the above phrases with slightly different perspectives. Some felt that when at school and possibly being bullied in playgrounds, it is almost impossible to turn the other cheek! At this point, the group questioned what should be done. Almost all members of the group felt that they were left with nothing but to simply ignore the situation and walk away, remembering that the Almighty is always around, watching what is happening. They felt that by leaving the situation in His hands, nothing can possibly go wrong.

The group queried what should be done if the bullying persisted over a period of time. Some members of the group felt that confrontation in this case, was the next best option. However, confrontation would not take the form of violence or with the use of harsh words, confrontation would be by simply making a request to the guilty party to stop their unwanted actions and then surrendering the rest to the Almighty. One member of the group questioned again whether turning the other cheek was the right thing to do when in difficult situations. He queried whether by turning the other cheek, we were making others feel guilty for their actions. However, if without violence or harsh words we can make others realise that what they are doing is wrong, then in fact, we are helping them become better individuals. So it all depends on what our motives are; If we confront others with the intention of making them feel guilty and hurt them in a non-violent way, then yes, we too are just as bad as the individual in the wrong. On the other hand, if we turn the other cheek as a form of confrontation, only to avoid the situation, then this is not wrong. The congregation teaches us to forgive, walk away from unpleasant situations, and leave the rest to the Almighty. However, we should be aware of what is happening around us and should be aware and alert to what is right and wrong. We should address behaviour, which we feel is not right.

The statement 'Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you' (Luke 6:28), was discussed by the younger members of the group. The children in this group agreed that the only way you could possibly bless those that curse you, was indeed by praying for them. We must put ourselves in their shoes and see what they see. We must then address their concerns. The group defined hatred as being no different to a mental illness; a form of illness. One who hates another may be suffering from their own troubles and turmoil's; they may find it difficult to love others. As God realised souls, we are lucky to understand that we should be 'loving' and not 'hating'. Loving others rather than using them for our benefit, is what we should be doing. It is our responsibility and duty as God realised souls to pray for and bless those that curse and use us. These are the teachings of the True Master.

The group summarised that whilst 'turning the other cheek' may be almost impossible to do from a human perspective, as spiritual beings, we have the knowledge and understanding to do this. Imbibing virtues such as humbleness and tolerance will help us to turn the other cheek. Saints have explained that by bowing down to others and letting go of our own ego, we will rise above that which is wrong; tolerance always leads to success. If we see the Almighty in all living beings, tolerance towards them will come naturally. With tolerance and humbleness, we can turn the other cheek, learn to accept our enemies and learn to pray for those that may hurt us.
